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"SURLY TIM."

A LANCASHIRE STORY.

By Frances Hodgson Burnett

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"Sorry to hear my fellow-workmen speak so disparagin' o' me? Well, Mester, that's as it may be yo' know. Happen my fellow-workmen ha' made a bit o' a mistake—happen what seems loike crustiness to them beant so much crustiness as summat else—happen I mought do my bit o' complainin' too. Yo' munnot trust aw yo' hear, Mester; that's aw I can say."

I looked at the man's bent face quite curiously, and, judging from its rather heavy but still not unprepossessing outline, I could not really call it a bad face, or even a sulky one. And yet both managers and hands had given me a bad account of Tim Hibblethwaite. "Surly Tim," they called him, and each had something to say about his sullen disposition to silence, and his short answers. Not that he was accused of anything like misdemeanor, but he was "glum loike," the factory people said, and "a surly fellow well deserving his name," as the master of his room had told me.

I had come to Lancashire to take the control of my father's spinning-factory a short time before, being anxious to do my best toward the hands, and, I often talked to one and another in a friendly way, so that I could the better understand their grievances and remedy them with justice to all parties concerned. So in conversing with men, women, and children, I gradually found out that Tim Hibblethwaite was in bad odor, and that he held himself doggedly aloof from all; and this was how, in the course of time, I came to speak to him about the matter, and the opening words of my story are the words of his answer. But they did not satisfy me by any means. I wanted to do the man justice myself, and see that justice was done to him by others; and then again when, after my curious look at him, he lifted his head from his work and drew the back of his hand across his warm face, I noticed that he gave his eyes a brush, and, glancing at him once more, I recognized the presence of a moisture in them.

In my anxiety to conceal that I had noticed anything unusual, I am afraid I spoke to him quite hurriedly. I was a young man then, and by no means as self-possessed as I ought to have been.

"I hope you won't misunderstand me, Hibblethwaite,"

I said; "I don't mean to complain—indeed, I have nothing to complain of, for Foxley tells me you are the steadiest and most orderly hand he has

under him; but the fact is, I should like to make friends with you all, and see that no one is treated badly. And somehow or other I found out that you were not disposed to feel friendly towards the rest, and I was sorry for it. But I suppose you have some reason of your own."

The man bent down over his work again, silent for a minute, to my discomfiture, but at last he spoke, almost huskily.

"Thank yo', Mester," he said; "yo're a koindly chap or yo' wouldn't ha' noticed. An' yo're not fur wrong either. I ha' reasons o' my own, tho' I'm loike to keep 'em to mysen most o' toimes. Th' fellows as throws their slurs on me would na understond 'em if I were loike to gab, which I never were. But happen th' toime 'll come when Surly Tim 'll tell his own tale, though I often think its loike it wunnot come till th' Day o' Judgment."

"I hope it will come before then," I said, cheerfully. "I hope the time is not far away when we shall all understand you, Hibblethwaite. I think it has been misunderstanding so far which has separated you from the rest, and it cannot last always, you know."

But he shook his head—not after a surly fashion, but, as I thought, a trifle sadly or heavily—so I did not ask any more questions, or try to force the subject upon him.

But I noticed him pretty closely as time went on, and the more I saw of him the more fully I was convinced that he was not so surly as people imagined. He never interfered with the most active of his enemies, nor made any reply when they taunted him, and more than once I saw him perform a silent, half-secret act of kindness. Once I caught him throwing half his dinner to a wretched little lad who had just come to the factory, and worked near him; and once again, as I was leaving the building on a rainy night, I came upon him on the stone steps at the door bending down with an almost pathetic clumsiness to pin the woolen shawl of a poor little mite, who, like so many others, worked with her shiftless father and mother to add to their weekly earnings. It was always the poorest and least cared for of the children whom he seemed to befriend, and very often I noticed that even when he was kindest, in his awkward man fashion, the little waifs were afraid of him, and showed their fear plainly.

The factory was situated on the outskirts of a thriving country town near Manchester, and at the end of the lane that led from it to the more thickly populated part there was a path crossing a field to the pretty church and church-yard, and this path was a short cut homeward for me. Being so pretty and quiet the place had a sort of attraction for me; and I was in the habit of frequently passing through it on my way, partly because it was pretty and quiet, perhaps, and partly, I have no doubt, because I was inclined to be weak and melancholy at the time, my health being broken down under hard study.

It so happened that in passing here one night, and glancing in among the graves and marble monuments as usual, I caught sight of a dark figure sitting upon a little mound under a tree and resting its head upon its hands, and in this sad-looking figure I recognized the muscular outline of my friend Surly Tim.

He did not see me at first, and I was almost inclined to think it best to leave him alone; but as I half turned away he stirred with something like a faint moan, and then lifted his head and saw me standing in the bright, clear moonlight.

"Who's theer?" he said. "Dost ta want owt?"

"It is only Doncaster, Hibblethwaite," I returned, as I sprang over the low stone wall to join him. "What is the matter, old fellow? I thought I heard you groan just now."

"Yo' mought ha' done, Mester," he answered heavily. "Happen tha did. I dunnot know mysen. Nowts th' matter though, as I knows on, on'y I'm a bit out o' soarts."

He turned his head aside slightly and began to pull at the blades of grass on the mound, and all at once I saw that his hand was trembling nervously.

It was almost three minutes before he spoke again.

"That un belongs to me," he said suddenly at last, pointing to a longer mound at his feet. "An' this little un," signifying with an indescribable gesture the small one upon which he sat.

"Poor fellow," I said, "I see now."

"A little lad o' mine," he said, slowly and tremulously. "A little lad o' mine an'—an' his mother.'

"What!" I exclaimed, "I never knew that you were a married man, Tim."

He dropped his head upon his hand again, still pulling nervously at the grass with the other.

"Th' law says I beant, Mester," he answered in a painful, strained fashion. "I conna tell mysen what God-a'-moighty 'ud say about it."

"I don't understand," I faltered; "you don't mean to say the poor girl never was your wife, Hibblethwaite."

"That's what th' law says," slowly; "I thowt different mysen, an' so did th' poor lass. That's what's the matter, Mester; that's th' trouble."

The other nervous hand went up to his bent face for a minute and hid it, but I did not speak. There was so much of strange grief in his simple movement that I felt words would be out of place. It was not my dogged, inexplicable "hand" who was sitting before me in the bright moonlight on the baby's grave; it was a man with a hidden history of some tragic sorrow long kept secret in his homely breast,—perhaps a history very few of us could read aright. I would not question him, though I fancied he meant to explain himself. I knew that if he was willing to tell me the truth it was best that he should choose his own time for it, and so I let him alone.

And before I had waited very long he broke the silence himself, as I had thought he would.

"It wur welly about six year ago I comn here," he said, "more or less, welly about six year. I wur a quiet chap then, Mester, an' had na many friends, but I had more than I ha' now. Happen I wur better nater'd, but just as loike I wur loigh-ter-hearted—but that's nowt to do wi' it.

"I had na been here more than a week when theer comes a young woman to moind a loom i' th' next room to me, an' this young woman bein' pretty an' modest takes my fancy. She wur na loike th' rest o' the wenches—loud talkin' an' slattern i' her ways; she wur just quiet loike and nowt else. First

time I seed her I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble;' an' somehow every toime I seed her afterward I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble.' It wur i' her eye—she had a soft loike brown eye, Mester—an' it wur i' her voice—her voice wur soft loike, too—I sometimes thowt it wur plain to be seed even i' her dress. If she'd been born a lady she'd ha' been one o' th' foine soart, an' as she'd been born a factory-lass she wur one o' th' foine soart still. So I took to watchin' her an' tryin' to mak' friends wi her, but I never had much luck wi' her till one neet I was goin' home through th' snow, and I seed her afore tighten' th' drift wi' nowt but a thin shawl over her head; so I goes up behind her an' I says to her, steady and respecful, so as she wouldna be feart, I says:—

"'Lass, let me see thee home. It's bad weather fur thee to be out in by thysen. Tak' my coat an' wrop thee up in it, an' tak' hold o' my arm an' let me help thee along.'

"She looks up right straightforrad i' my face wi' her brown eyes, an' I tell yo' Mester, I wur glad I wur a honest man 'stead o' a rascal, fur them quiet eyes 'ud ha' fun me out afore I'd ha' done sayin' my say if I'd meant harm.

"'Thank yo' kindly Mester Hibblethwaite,' she says, 'but dunnot tak' off tha' coat fur me; I'm doin' pretty nicely. It is Mester Hibblethwaite, beant it?'

"'Aye, lass,' I answers, 'it's him. Mought I ax yo're name.'

"'Aye, to be sure,' said she. 'My name's Rosanna—'Sanna Brent th' folk at th' mill alius ca's me. I work at th' loom i' th' next room to thine. I've seed thee often an' often.'

"So we walks home to her lodgins, an' on the way we talks together friendly an' quiet loike, an th' more we talks th' more I sees she's had trouble an' by an' by—bein' on'y common workin' folk, we're straightforrad to each other in our plain way—it comes out what her trouble has been.

"'Yo' p'raps wouldn't think I've been a married woman, Mester,' she says; 'but I ha', an' I wedded an' rued. I married a sojer when I wur a giddy young wench, four years ago, an' it wur th' worst thing as ever I did i' aw

my days. He wur one o' yo're handsome, fastish chaps, an' he tired o' me as men o' his stripe alius do tire o' poor lasses, an' then he ill-treated me. He went to th' Crimea after we'n been wed a year, an' left me to shift fur mysen. An' I heard six month after he wur dead. He'd never writ back to me nor sent me no help, but I couldna think he wur dead till th' letter comn. He wur killed th' first month he wur out fightin' th' Rooshians. Poor fellow! Poor Phil! Th' Lord ha' mercy on him!'

"That wur how I found out about her trouble, an' somehow it seemed to draw me to her, an' mak' me feel kindly to'ards her; 'twur so pitiful to hear her talk about th' rascal, so sorrowful an' gentle, an' not gi' him a real hard word for a' he'd done. But that's alius th' way wi' women folk—th' more yo' harry's them, th' more they'll pity yo' an' pray for yo'. Why she wurna more than twenty-two then, an' she must ha' been nowt but a slip o' a lass when they wur wed.

"Hows'ever, Rosanna Brent an' me got to be good friends, an' we walked home together o' nights, an talked about our bits o' wage, an' our bits o' debt, an' th' way that wench 'ud keep me up i' spirits when I wur a bit down-hearted about owt, wur just a wonder. She wur so quiet an' steady, an' when she said owt she meant it, an' she never said too much or too little. Her brown eyes alius minded me o' my mother, though th' old woman deed when I were nobbut a little chap, but I never seed 'Sanna Brent smile th'out thinkin' o' how my mother looked when I wur kneelin' down sayin' my prayers after her. An' bein' as th' lass wur so dear to me, I made up my mind to ax her to be summat dearer. So once goin' home along wi' her, I takes hold o' her hand an' lifts it up an' kisses it gentle—as gentle an' wi' summat th' same feelin' as I'd kiss th' Good Book.

"'Sanna,' I says, 'bein' as yo've had so much trouble wi' yo're first chance, would yo' be afeard to try a second? Could yo' trust a mon again? Such a mon as me, 'Sanna?'

"'I wouldna be feart to trust thee, Tim,' she answers back soft an' gentle after a manner. 'I wouldna be feart to trust thee any time.'

"I kisses her hand again, gentler still.

"'God bless thee, lass,' I says. 'Does that mean yes?'

"She crept up closer to me i' her sweet, quiet way.

"'Aye, lad,' she answers. 'It means yes, an' I'll bide by it.'

"'An' tha shalt never rue it, lass,' said I 'Tha's gi'en thy life to me, an' I'll gi' mine to thee, sure and true.'

"So we wur axed i' th' church th' next Sunday, an' a month fro then we wur wed, an' if ever God's sun shone on a happy mon, it shone on one that day, when we come out o' church together—me and Rosanna—an' went to our bit o' a home to begin life again. I coujdna tell thee, Mester—theer beant no words to tell how happy an' peaceful we lived fur two year after that. My lass never altered her sweet ways, an' I just loved her to make up to her fur what had gone by. I thanked God-a'-moighty fur his blessing every day, and every day I prayed to be made worthy of it. An' here's just wheer I'd like to ax a question, Mester, about sum m at 'ats worretted me a good deal. I dunnot want to question th' Maker, but I would loike to know how it is 'at sometime it seems 'at we're clean forgot—as if He couldna fash hissen about our troubles, an' most loike left 'em to work out their-sens. Yo' see, Mester, an' we aw see sometime He thinks on us an' gi's us a lift, but hasna tha thysen seen times when tha stopt short an' axed thysen, 'Wheer's God-a'-moighty 'at he isna straighten things out a bit? Th' world's i' a power o' a snarl. Th' righteous is forsaken, 'n his seed's beggin' bread. An' th' devil's topmost agen.' I've talked to my lass about it sometimes, an' I dunnot think I meant harm, Mester, for I felt humble enough—an' when I talked, my lass she'd listen an' smile soft an' sorrowful, but she never gi' me but one answer.

"'Tim,' she'd say, 'this is on'y th' skoo' an we're th' scholars, an' He's teachin' us his way We munnot be loike th' children o' Israel i' th' Wilderness, an' turn away fro' th' cross 'cause o' th' Sarpent. We munnot say, "Theer's a snake:" we mun say, "Theer's th' Cross, an' th' Lord gi' it to us." Th' teacher wouldna be o' much use, Tim, if th' scholars knew as much as he did, an' I allus think it's th' best to comfort mysen wi' sayin', "Th' Lord-a'-moighty, He knows."'

"An' she alius comforted me too when I wur worretted. Life looked smooth somewhow them three year. Happen th' Lord sent 'em to me to make up fur what wur comin'.

"At th' eend o' th' first year th' child wur born, th' little lad here," touching the turf with his hand, "'Wee Wattie' his mother ca'd him, an' he wur a fine, lightsome little chap. He filled th' whole house wi' music day in an' day out, crowin' an' crowin'—an' cryin' too sometime. But if ever yo're a feyther, Mester, yo'll find out 'at a baby's cry's music often enough, an' yo'll find, too, if yo' ever lose one, 'at yo'd give all yo'd getten just to hear even th' worst o' cryin'. Rosanna she couldna find i' her heart to set th' little un out o' her arms a minnit, an' she'd go about th' room wi' her eyes aw leeted up, an' her face bloomin' like a slip o' a girl's, an' if she laid him i' th' cradle her head 'ud be turnt o'er har shoulder aw th' time lookin' at him an' singin' bits o' sweet-soundin' foolish woman-folks' songs. I thowt then 'at them old nursery songs wur th' happiest music I ever heard, an' when 'Sanna sung 'em they minded me o' hymn-tunes.

"Well, Mester, before th' spring wur out Wee Wat was toddlin' round holdin' to his mother's gown, an' by th' middle o' th' next he was cooin' like a dove, an' prattlin' words i' a voice like hers. His eyes wur big an' brown an' straightforrad like hers, an' his mouth was like hers, an' his curls wur the color o' a brown bee's back. Happen we set too much store by him, or happen it wur on'y th' Teacher again teachin' us his way, but hows'ever that wur, I came home one sunny mornin' fro' th' factory, an' my dear lass met me at th' door, all white an' cold, but tryin' hard to be brave an' help me to bear what she had to tell.

"'Tim,' said she, 'th' Lord ha' sent us a trouble; but we can bear it together, conna we, dear lad?'

"That wur aw, but I knew what it meant, though th' poor little lamb had been well enough when I kissed him last.

"I went in an' saw him lyin' theer on his pillows strugglin' an' gaspin' in hard convulsions, an' I seed aw was over. An' in half an hour, just as th' sun crept across th' room an' touched his curls th' pretty little chap opens his eyes aw at once.

"'Daddy!' he crows out. 'Sithee Dad—! an' he lift' hissen up, catches at th' floatin' sun shine, laughs at it, and fa's back—dead, Mester.

"I've allus thowt 'at th' Lord-a'-moighty knew what He wur doin' when he gi' th' woman t' Adam i' th' Garden o' Eden. He knowed he wur nowt but a poor chap as couldna do fur hissen; an' I suppose that's th' reason he gi' th' woman th' strength to bear trouble when it comn. I'd ha' gi'en clean in if it hadna been fur my lass when th' little chap deed. I never tackledt owt i' aw my days 'at hurt me as heavy as losin' him did. I couldna abear th' sight o' his cradle, an' if ever I comn across any o' his bits o' playthings, I'd fa' to cryin' an' shakin' like a babby. I kept out o' th' way o' th' neebors' children even. I wasna like Rosanna. I couldna see quoite clear what th' Lord meant, an' I couldna help murmuring sad and heavy. That's just loike us men, Mester; just as if th' dear wench as had give him her life fur food day an' neet, hadna fur th' best reet o' th' two to be weak an' heavy-hearted.

"But I getten welly over it at last, an' we was beginnin' to come round a bit an' look forrard to th' toime we'd see him agen 'stead o' luokin' back to th' toime we shut th' round bit of a face under th' coffin-lid. Th' day comn when we could bear to talk about him an' moind things he'd said an' tried to say i' his broken babby way. An' so we wur creepin' back again to th' old happy quiet, an' we had been for welly six month, when summat fresh come. I'll never forget it, Mester, th' neet it happened. I'd kissed Rosanna at th' door an' left her standin' theer when I went up to th' village to buy summat she wanted. It wur a bright moon light neet, just such a neet as this, an' th' lass had followed me out to see th' moonshine, it wur so bright an' clear; an' just before I starts she folds both her hands on my shoulder an' says, soft an' thoughtful:—

"'Tim, I wonder if th' little chap sees us?'

"'I'd loike to know, dear lass,' I answers back. An' then she speaks again:—

"'Tim, I wonder if he'd know he was ours if he could see, or if he'd ha' forgot? He wur such a little fellow.'

"Them wur th' last peaceful words I ever heerd her speak. I went up to th' village an' getten what she sent me fur, an' then I comn back. Th' moon wur shinin' as bright as ever, an' th' flowers i' her slip o' a garden wur aw sparklin' wi' dew. I seed 'em as I went up th' walk, an' I thowt again of what she'd said bout th' little lad.

"She wasna outside, an' I couldna see a leet about th' house, but I heerd voices, so I walked straight in—into th' entry an' into th' kitchen, an' theer she wur, Mester—my poor wench, crouchin' down by th' table, hidin' her face i' her hands, an' close beside her wur a mon—a mon i' red sojer clothes.

"My heart leaped into my throat, an' fur a min nit I hadna a word, fur I saw summat wui up, though I couldna tell what it wur. But at last my voice come back.

"'Good evenin', Mester,' I says to him; 'I hope yo' ha'not broughten ill-news? What ails thee, dear lass?'

"She stirs a little, an' gives a moan like a dyin' child; and then she lifts up her wan, brokenhearted face, an' stretches out both her hands to me.

"'Tim,' she says, 'dunnot hate me, lad, dunnot. I thowt he wur dead long sin'. I thowt 'at th' Rooshans killed him an' I wur free, but I amna. I never wur. He never deed, Tim, an' theer he is—the mon as I wur wed to an' left by. God forgi' him, an' oh, God forgi' me!'

"Theer, Mester, theer's a story fur thee. What dost ta' think o't? My poor lass wasna my wife at aw—th' little chap's mother wasna his feyther's wife, an' never had been. That theer worthless fellow as beat an' starved her an' left her to fight th' world alone, had comn back alive an' well, ready to begin agen. He could tak' her away fro' me any hour i' th' day, and I couldna say a word to bar him. Th' law said my wife—th' little dead lad's mother—belonged to him, body an' soul. Theer was no law to help us—it wur aw on his side.

"Theer's no use o' goin' o'er aw we said to each other i' that dark room theer. I raved an' prayed an' pled wi' th' lass to let me carry her across th' seas, wheer I'd heerd tell theer was help fur such loike; but she pled back i' her broken, patient way that it wouldna be reet, an' happen it wur the Lord's will. She didna say much to th' sojer. I scarce heerd her speak to him more than once, when she axed him to let her go away by hersen.

"'Tha conna want me now, Phil,' she said. 'Tha conna care fur me. Tha must know I'm more this mon's wife than thine. But I dunnot ax thee to gi'

me to him because I know that wouldna be reet; I on'y ax thee to let me aloan. I'll go fur enough off an' never see him more.'

"But th' villain held to her. If she didna come wi' him, he said, he'd ha' her up before th' court fur bigamy. I could ha' done murder then, Mester, an' I would ha' done if it hadna been for th' poor lass runnin' in betwixt us an' pleadin' wi' aw her might. If we'n been rich foak theer might ha' been some help fur her, at least; th' law might ha' been browt to mak' him leave her be, but bein' poor workin' foak theer wur on'y one thing: th' wife mun go wi' th' husband, an' theer th' husband stood—a scoundrel, cursin', wi' his black heart on his tongue.

"'Well,' says th' lass at last, fair wearied out wi' grief, 'I'll go wi' thee, Phil, an' I'll do my best to please thee, but I wunnot promise to forget th' mon as has been true to me, an' has stood betwixt me an' th' world.'

"Then she turned round to me.

"'Tim,' she said to me, as if she wur haaf feart—aye, feart o' him, an' me standin' by. Three hours afore, th' law ud ha' let me mill any mon 'at feart her. 'Tim,' she says, 'surely he wunnot refuse to let us go together to th' little lad's grave—fur th' last time.' She didna speak to him but ti me, an' she spoke still an' strained as if she wui too heart-broke to be wild. Her face was as white as th' dead, but she didna cry, as ony other woman would ha' done. 'Come, Tim,' she said, 'he conna say no to that.'

"An' so out we went 'thout another word, an' left th' black-hearted rascal behind, sittin' i' th' very room th' little un deed in. His cradle stood theer i' th' corner. We went out into th' moonlight 'thout speakin', an' we didna say a word until we come to this very place, Mester.

"We stood here for a minute silent, an' then I sees her begin to shake, an' she throws hersen down on th' grass wi' her arms flung o'er th' grave, an' she cries out as if her death-wound had been give to her.

"'Little lad,' she says, 'little lad, dost ta see thy mother? Canst na tha hear her callin' thee? Little lad, get nigh to th' Throne an' plead!'

"I fell down beside o' th' poor crushed wench an' sobbed wi' her. I couldna comfort her, for wheer wur there any comfort for us? Theer wur

none left—theer wur no hope. We was shamed an' broke down—our lives was lost. Th' past wur nowt—th' future wur worse. Oh, my poor lass, how hard she tried to pray—fur me, Mester—yes, fur me, as she lay theer wi' her arms round her dead babby's grave, an' her cheek on th' grass as grew o'er his breast. 'Lord God-a'-moighty, she says, 'help us—dunnot gi' us up—dunnot, dunnot. We conna do 'thowt thee now, if th' time ever wur when we could. Th' little chap mun be wi' thee, I moind th' bit o' comfort about getherin' th' lambs i' his bosom. An', Lord, if tha could spare him a minnit, send him down to us wi' a bit o' leet. Oh, Feyther! help th' poor lad here—help him. Let th' weight fa' on me, not on him. Just help th' poor lad to bear it. If ever I did owt as wur worthy i' thy sight, let that be my reward. Dear Lord-a'-moighty, I'd be willin' to gi' up a bit o' my own heavenly glory fur th' dear lad's sake.'

"Well, Mester, she lay theer on th' grass pray in' an crying wild but gentle, fur nigh haaf an hour, an' then it seemed 'at she got quoite loike, an' she got up. Happen th' Lord had hearkened an' sent th' child—happen He had, fur when she getten up her face looked to me aw white an' shinin' i' th' clear moonlight.

"'Sit down by me, dear lad,' she said, 'an' hold my hand a minnit.' I set down an' took hold of her hand, as she bid me.

"'Tim,' she said, 'this wur why th' little chap deed. Dost na tha see now 'at th' Lord knew best?'

"'Yes, lass,' I answers humble, an' lays my face on her hand, breakin' down again.

"'Hush, dear lad,' she whispers, 'we hannot time fur that. I want to talk to thee. Wilta listen?'

"'Yes, wife,' I says, an' I heerd her sob when I said it, but she catches hersen up again.

"'I want thee to mak' me a promise,' said she. 'I want thee to promise never to forget what peace we ha' had. I want thee to remember it allus, an' to moind him 'at's dead, an' let his little hond howd thee back fro' sin an' hard thowts. I'll pray fur thee neet an' day, Tim, an' tha shalt pray fur me, an' happen theer'll come a leet. But if theer dunnot, dear lad—an' I dunnot

see how theer could—if theer dunnot, an' we never see each other agen, I want thee to mak' me a promise that if tha sees th' little chap first tha'lt moind him o' me, and watch out wi' him nigh th' gate, and I'll promise thee that if I see him first, I'll moind him o' thee an' watch out true an' constant.'

"I promised her, Mester, as yo' can guess, an' we kneeled down an' kissed th' grass, an' she took a bit o' th' sod to put i' her bosom. An' then we stood up an' looked at each other, an' at last she put her dear face on my breast an' kissed me, as she had done every neet sin' we were mon an' wife.

"'Good-bye, dear lad,' she whispers—her voice aw broken. 'Doant come back to th' house till I'm gone. Good-bye, dear, dear, lad, an' God bless thee.' An' she slipped out o' my arms an' wur gone in a moment awmost before I could cry out.

"Theer isna much more to tell, Mester—th' eend's comin' now, an' happen it'll shorten off th' story, so 'at it seems suddent to thee. But it were-na suddent to me. I lived alone here, an' worked, an' moinded my own business, an' answered no questions fur nigh about a year, hearin' nowt, an' seein' nowt, an' hopin' nowt, till one toime when th' daisies were blowin' on th' little grave here, theer come to me a letter fro' Manchester fro' one o' th' medical chaps i' th' hospital. It wur a short letter wi' prent on it, an' the moment I seed it I knowed summat wur up, an' I opened it tremblin'. Mester, theer wur a woman lyin' i' one o' th' wards dyin' o' some long-named heart-disease, an' she'd prayed 'em to send fur me, an' one o' th' young softhearted ones had writ me a line to let me know.

"I started aw'most afore I'd finished readin' th' letter, an' when I getten to th' place I fun just what I knowed I should. I fun her—my wife—th' blessed lass, an' 'f I'd been an hour later I would-na ha' seen her alive, fur she were nigh past knowin' me then.

"But I knelt down by th' bedside an' I plead wi' her as she lay theer, until I browt her back to th world again fur one moment. Her eyes flew wide open aw at onct, an' she seed me an' smiled, aw her dear face quiverin' i' death.

"'Dear lad,' she whispered, 'th' path was na so long after aw. Th' Lord knew—He trod it hissen' onct, yo' know. I knowed tha'd come—I prayed so. I've reached th' very eend now, Tim, an' I shall see th' little lad first. But I wunnot forget my promise—no. I'll look out—fur thee—fur thee—at th' gate.'

"An' her eyes shut slow an' quiet, an' I knowed she was dead.

"Theer, Mester Doncaster, theer it aw is, fur theer she lies under th' daisies cloost by her child, fur I browt her here an' buried her. Th' fellow as come betwixt us had tortured her fur a while an' then left her again, I fun out—an' she wur so afeard of doin' me some harm that she wouldna come nigh me. It wur heart disease as killed her, th' medical chaps said, but I knowed better—it wur heart-break. That's aw. Sometimes I think o'er it till I conna stand it any longer, an' I'm fain to come here an' lay my hand on th' grass,—an' sometimes I ha' queer dreams about her. I had one last neet. I thowt 'at she comn to me aw at onct just as she used to look, on'y, wi' her white face shinin' loike a star, an' she says, 'Tim, th' path isna so long after aw—tha's come nigh to th' eend, an' me an' th' little chap is waitin'. He knows thee, dear lad, fur I've towt him.'

"That's why I comn here to-neet, Mester; an' I believe that's why I've talked so free to thee. If I'm near th' eend I'd loike some one to know, I ha' meant no hurt when I seemed grum an' surly, It wurna ill-will, but a heavy heart."

He stopped here, and his head drooped upon his hands again, and for a minute or so there was another dead silence. Such a story as this needed no comment. I could make none. It seemed to me that the poor fellow's sore heart could bear none. At length he rose from the turf and stood up, looking out over the graves into the soft light beyond with a strange, wistful sadness.

"Well, I mun go now," he said slowly. "Good-neet, Mester, good-neet, an' thank yo' fur listenin'."

"Good night," I returned, adding, in an impulse of pity that was almost a passion, "and God help you!"

"Thank yo' again, Mester!" he said, and then turned away; and as I sat pondering I watched his heavy drooping figure threading its way among the dark mounds and white marble, and under the shadowy trees, and out into the path beyond. I did not sleep well that night. The strained, heavy tones of the man's voice were in my ears, and the homely yet tragic story seemed to weave itself into all my thoughts, and keep me from rest. I could not get it out of my mind.

In consequence of this sleeplessness I was later than usual in going down to the factory, and when I arrived at the gates I found an unusual bustle there. Something out of the ordinary routine had plainly occurred, for the whole place was in confusion. There was a crowd of hands grouped about one corner of the yard, and as I came in a man ran against me, and showed me a terribly pale face.

"I ax pardon, Mester Doncaster," he said in a wild hurry, "but theer's an accident happened. One o' th' weavers is hurt bad, an' I'm goin' fur th' doctor. Th' loom caught an' crushed him afore we could stop it."

For some reason or other my heart misgave me that very moment. I pushed forward to the group in the yard corner, and made my way through it.

A man was lying on a pile of coats in the middle of the by-standers,—a poor fellow crushed and torn and bruised, but lying quite quiet now, only for an occasional little moan, that was scarcely more than a quick gasp for breath. It was Surly Tim!

"He's nigh th' eend o' it now!" said one of the hands pityingly. "He's nigh th' last now, poor chap! What's that he's savin', lads?"

For all at once some flickering sense seemed to have caught at one of the speaker's words, and the wounded man stirred, murmuring faintly—but not to the watchers. Ah, no! to something far, far beyond their feeble human sight—to something in the broad Without.

"Th' eend!" he said, "aye, this is th' eend, dear lass, an' th' path's aw shinin' or summat an—Why, lass, I can see thee plain, an' th' little chap too!"

Another flutter of the breath, one slight movement of the mangled hand, and I bent down closer to the poor fellow—closer, because my eyes were so dimmed that I could not see.

"Lads," I said aloud a few seconds later, "you can do no more for him. His pain is over!"

For with a sudden glow of light which shone upon the shortened path and the waiting figures of his child and its mother, Surly Tim's earthly trouble had ended.

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